

'Things Fall Apart' in Africa: The Final Stage of European Penetration

By 1900, the situation was grim for Africa with the onset of the final stage of European penetration representing imperialism at its mightiest. This essay rewinds back to focus on how Africa arrived at such a grim state starting in the late 19th century. Specifically, this essay examines if the impact of Europeans on 19th century Africa across the domains of politics, religion, and disease is captured in the phrase “things fall apart.” This essay will support the view that European imperialism caused things to fall apart in Africa.

Before any of the aspects of this thesis are examined, a background must be established. First, the loss of African sovereignty is key to understanding this last stage of European penetration. Scholars Ronald Oliver and Anthony Atmore say it clearly: startling changes in Africa occurred in the “last quarter of the nineteenth century” (118). By 1879, 90% of the African continent was ruled by Africans and just 21 years later, all but a “tiny fraction” was under the rule of European capitalist powers (Atmore & Oliver, 118; Harman, 393). Chris Harman specifically names Britain, France and Belgium as the biggest European powers that controlled much of the continent, saying that there were only “small slices for Germany and Italy” (393). Imperialism was spreading and almost nothing seemed to stop its wrath of terror with natives being conquered in what some called “pacification” or “hammering.” As J.F. Ade Ajayi notes, “explorers, missionaries and traders” served as “pathfinders for European imperialists in Africa” which led to a situation in which “African states acted in their own individual interest” but did not unite together to stop European imperialism (320, 322). This was also because of the “legacy of wars,” rivalries and other disputes between African states (Ajayi, 322). Such rivalries, and disputes, some of which came from pre-colonial times, were exploited by European imperialists for their own gain. All of these factors left Africa vulnerable to increasing European imperialism in the late 19th century and into the 20th century.

To set the groundwork for the domains of religion and disease, it is the impact of Europeans on the

African continent through the domain of politics is key. Chris Harman writes that European 'explorers' were only able to get as far as they did because “structured societies and established states existed” (394). He reminds readers that early “European attempts to carve out colonies in Africa” led to bloody battles “which they often lost” (Harman, 394). However, by the 1880s, this had changed: “accelerated industrialisation of Western Europe” shifted the balance with new weapons like Gatling Guns and “steel-plated steamships,” creating a situation in which European industrial might could not be matched by the Africans (Harman, 394-5). Harman points out that philanthropy or racism was not the reason for imperialism worldwide—it was that “the great powers *thought* empires would make them richer” (395). In addition, European powers were pushed forward by increasing nationalism “fueled by imperialist expansion and industrial commerce” which prompted individuals to place their country first and involve themselves in a “game of chess” between competing European powers (Babajanian 2013; Goucher, LeGuin, & Walton 2004). As European empires expanded, they “tended to collide with one another” with the outcomes depending on strength of “armed forces” (Harman, 396).

This “game of chess” was basically a new drive for empire with European powers wanting raw materials for their industrial machines as part of the “scramble for Africa.” The “scramble” was written down on paper, in a conference in which no Africans were present: the infamous Berlin Conference from 1884 to 1885. In this conference, imperialism was legitimized with European powers only having to notify fellow countries taking part in the conference of their “colonies or protectorates” in Africa, as long as those claims were backed up by force (Oliver & Atmore, 126). While this ended the British idea of an “informal empire,” it set the stage for future European conquest (Oliver & Atmore, 126). This conference also replaced the “collaborative arrangements between European powers” prior to this point in the 19th century, resulting in the “separate assertion of individual European nations in Africa” (Bell & Stone, 298).

It is important to not generalize European imperialism and believe it was the same everywhere. It was not. Imperialism by different European powers affected Africans differently. After all, the

colonial rule fell mainly into two main forms: “indirect rule as pursued by the British, which relied on indigenous power structures, or a more centralized style of rule, as preferred by the French” (Barkey & Parikh, 544). Basil Davidson says in *This Magnificent African Cake*, an episode of a larger documentary, that there was a distinct difference between the French and British: the French wanted black Africans to become French citizens while the British thought that Africans would never be British citizens (Dread 2014). Both forms of domination were equally racist, as one suggested that Africans had to attain European status to be worthy (French), while another said that they were below the status of European citizens (British). The French, unlike the British, were deeply attracted to the “concept of assimilation” making it one of their governing principles for their colonies, but the origins of French assimilation dated back to the “revolutionary period” of the 1790s (Betts, 10-12). More broadly, since the British and French ruled over much of the African continent, the British having an empire stretching from “Cairo to Capetown,” (YouTube 2012) this comparison is deeply important. As for the French, they had control of huge swathes of North, East and West Africa, along with Equatorial Africa, stretching from Algeria to Capetown (Images et Savoirs 2014). At the same time, other powers, such as the Germans, Italians, Spanish, Portuguese and Belgians had a foothold in the continent.

It is also important to recognize the specifics of British imperialism. A mining boom in Southern Africa made it “difficult for impoverished colonial governments” or certain African rulers “to resist proposals for mineral concessions,” allowing profit for European capitalists (Fage & Oliver, 281). There are two main examples of British imperialism still affecting Africa. The first is the division of North and South of Uganda which was done to create tension to “maintain British rule” and the second is the reunification of a divided Sudan before independence in 1956 which has resulted in a “relentless civil war” since that time (Youtube 2012). At the same time, the British won two separate wars against the Matabele in the 1890s and after the second war, Cecil Rhodes died with the Ndebele giving him a royal salute, showing that they are bowing to the power of whites (ACED 2003; Maylam, 111). The British were also victorious in a forty-minute war against the Zanzibar Sultanate in 1896 and a victory

against the Boers in 1902 (Bennett, 179; Glenday, 118; Pakenham 1979). The latter war, which senior British Army Officer Herbert Kitchener described as “the clearance of civilians—uprooting a whole nation” was followed by the creation of concentration camps where the British “interned Boer and Black women and children,” 26,000 of whom would perish (Matsinhe, 164-5; Wessels, 32). Clearly, Indian anti-colonial resistance leader Mohandas Gandhi was right, when he said in 1937 that “British Imperialism is the enemy of the world” (Rashtriya, 138).

While all European imperialists were brutal, the Belgians were some of the worst. Joseph Conrad, despite his racialized thought, said Belgians engaged in “the vilest scramble for loot” that had ever characterized “the history of human conscience and geographical exploration” (Gordon 2013). They engaged in a reign of terror in the Congo, which Patrice Lumumba, the first President of an independent Congo, would later characterize as “forced labour...atrocious sufferings,” land seizure, racial discrimination and a “regime of injustice, oppression and exploitation” (Lumumba 1960). This terror specifically included slave labor of Africans and the killing of between 2-13 million native Congolese between 1885 and 1908 (Genocide Studies Program 2014). In Rwanda, the Belgians politicized the cultures of the Hutu, which they considered a work force, and the Tutsi, which they considered as an extension of Belgian rule, which “profoundly contribute[d] to the genocide of 1994” (Youtube 2012). In the Portuguese colonies, it wasn't any better. African farmers engaged in forced labor, selling cotton at very low prices set by the colonial government. Even more insulting, the shirts made with the cotton they picked were sold back to them. Anyone who caused trouble with this process was whipped and sent to jail. Later on, when European exiles came to Portuguese colonies to seek a better life, the colonial Portuguese government exploited this by instituting a segregated economy for blacks which was controlled by whites.

Such a description does not describe the conditions of imperialism conducted by the Germans. Social revolutionary Rosa Luxembourg believed that Germany, which colonized in Tanzania and Namibia, had an interest in colonies because it had a “desire to present a general challenge to the power

of other capitalist states,” a view that was confirmed by other writers (Etherington, 125; Washausen, 21). The Germans engaged numerous atrocities including committing “the first genocide of the 20th century” against the Herero people (Youtube 2013). As Lorenzo Veracini explains in the *Australian Humanities Review*, “the military genocide” of the Hetero “followed just another case of anticolonial insubordination” and that military commanders had an “expectation that Southwest Africa needed to be a white settler country” (Veracini 2003). German military forces, which cared little about “limits set by international law,” engaged in military expeditions to punish those revolted against them, sometimes with British help (Miller, 9; Hull, 182). Despite the fact that Germany built structures in their colonies “meant to last” like schools and hospitals, an anti-colonial feeling in Germany induced by the genocide of the Herero people weakened the empire, leading to its decline (Miller, 21, 22, 68).

One cannot forget the imperialism of the Italians and Spanish, which is often neglected because of their small role. Spain had control of two colonies in coastal West Africa: Equatorial Guinea and Western Sahara which were “underdeveloped as compared to those of the [other] European powers” (Taylor 2003; South African History Online 2003). In the Berlin Conference and later by local natives, Spain's claim to present-day Western Sahara was legitimized, but native Africans that didn't recognize their legitimacy engaged in warfare against them (Besenyő 2009). Later, the French even attempted to take over the territory with raids which went on for years (Besenyő 2009). As for the Italians, they occupied Libya, present-day Eritrea, and part of present-day Somalia. Italy, however, was very poor at colonization, coming late to the game, only having “resurgence in the idea of an Italian Empire” during WWI (Strutton 2012). Just like the French, the Italians “developed a centralised administration,” but it aimed to send “Italians to live in the colonies” from which they wanted to project their strength (South African History Online 2003). Despite a superiority of industrial might, in 1896, the Italians suffered one of the rare defeats of a colonial power on the battlefield in Ethiopia (Pakenham, 7).

The imperialism of European powers ties directly into the domain of religion. It is important to recognize what social activist and linguistics professor Noam Chomsky describes as the colonial

mindset: that “the barbarians are backward and inferior and for their own benefit we have to uplift them, civilize them and educate them” (YouTube 2012). This colonial mindset still doesn't explain the domain of religion adequately, it only introduces it.

In order to fully recognize it, one must turn to the video titled *The Bible and the Gun*, which is part of the same documentary series as *This Magnificent African Cake* (OurModernHistory 2013). The video brings clarity to the clash between African and European religious ideas. It also explains that it became normal and “necessary” in the view of Europeans to think of blacks as subhuman, resulting in racism growing out of slavery. Importantly, not even the clergy spoke out against the slave trade since some profited from it. After the abolishment of the slave trade, European explorers came into the interior of Africa to find resources and geographic information and expressed their view that Africans were inferior. British explorer David Livingstone said that whites were “members of a superior race” and that black Africans were “more degraded portions of the human family” who should be “civilized” (Blaikie 1880). British imperialist Cecil Rhodes said that whites were the “finest race in the world” and that parts of Africa were “inhabited by the most despicable” people who could bring “extra employment” to the British Empire (Jaide 2008). Rhodes is important to mention because he is an iconic example of a European imperialist in Africa, pushing forward the British expansionist efforts in Southern Africa. He is also perhaps the only European or person in the world to have two countries named after him: Northern Rhodesia (present-day Zambia) and Southern Rhodesia (present-day Zimbabwe). His “aggressive imperialism and exploitative business practices” have forever been implanted in the collective memory of Africa (Maylam, v). Such racist views of Rhodes and Livingstone perpetuated a clash of religious ideas between European Christianity, traditional African faiths and Islam.

Most European missionaries coming to the African continent believed they could raise Africans up from this “inferiority,” thinking that European spiritual beliefs were superior to African beliefs. Changes in African societies on the eve of European conquest came in part from European missionaries

and traders since many “Africans welcomed the missionaries” for the European education that they offered (Ajayi, 316-7). In tropical Africa, in particular, such missionary education led to “the first real African nationalists,” who wanted to “run their own lives for themselves,” helped create the inklings of anti-colonial thought which was oddly enough dismissed by Europeans at the time (Oliver & Atmore, 167-9). Some states in Southern Africa even allowed missionaries to be their advisers, but later felt conflicted (Ajayi, 318). Missionaries played a key role in “the weakening of African states” (Ajayi, 320-1). Once European “traders, explorers and missionaries” began to identify themselves with specific European powers and “agents of imperialism,” African rulers began to play European powers off of each other (Ajayi, 322).

This description of missionary influence in Africa is still very limited. After all, the missionary enterprise which should really be called missionary imperialism, was tied deeply to colonialism. Some missionaries advocated that “establishment of European rule was a necessary condition for successful evangelicalization and development” (Ajayi, 321). However, missionary efforts also sharpened contradictions within society by preaching equality, but also being part of a racist oppressive system. Even worse for the European imperialists, missionary schools that led to increased literacy and education among Africans also served as a breeding ground for anti-colonial voices, as noted earlier, which led to the downfall of such brutal European rule.

Chinua Achebe's piece of historical fiction, titled *Things Fall Apart*, where this essay gets part of its title, looks at the influence of missionaries, and the clash between African and European religious ideas. The protagonist, Okonkwo, is a respected warrior in his community which had a number of traditional customs to avoid wars between differing communities before European arrival. By Chapter 16, more than halfway through the book, European missionaries begin to come to Okonkwo's community, causing a “considerable stir” and disturbing the religious balance (Achebe, 144-6). Part of the reason for this is that the commanding missionary tells the villagers that they are worshipping “false gods, gods of wood and stone” and that the Christian god is the true god, which was deeply unsettling

for these villagers (Achebe, 145). The missionaries don't stop there. They built a church on land that the locals said was cursed, staying alive and healthy, unlike locals who tried to live there (Achebe, 149). The main aim of the missionaries, which was basically to declare Western Christianity superior and declare the native religions inferior, was a success. In the closing part of the book, it seems evident that the missionaries laid the groundwork for a colonial structure in Okonkwo's community with colonial administrators wanting to continue their push to "bring civilization to different parts of Africa" (Achebe, 208). In the haunting last sentence of the book, the colonial administrator decides to call his effort to control this native community "The Pacification of the Primitive Tribes of the Lower Niger" which is symbolic of racist and imperialist European efforts to "civilize" Africa (Achebe, 209).

All of this missionary work is important to recognize because religion has been in Africa from the beginning. Walter Rodney wrote that "...both Islam and Christianity found homes on the African continent almost from their very inception" and that before European contact, "religion pervaded African societies just as it pervaded life in other pre-feudal societies" (35). Rodney later explained that European missionaries blessed "Africans as they were about to be launched across the Atlantic into slavery," showing their complicity with an oppressive system (114). Additionally, he says that "most European missionaries promoted the kinds of activity that went along with colonial rule" (Rodney, 143). Interestingly, it seemed that the "existence of the Buganda kingdom within independent Uganda" was the result of "presence of the missionaries and the British" (Rodney, 229). More than halfway through his book, Rodney writes that "the Christian missionaries were as much a part of the colonizing forces as were the explorers, traders, and soldiers," and later describes them as "agents of colonialism in the practical sense" (252). In part, this is because the colonial educational system in Africa was handled by the church which promoted "capitalist individualism" which was "destructive in colonial Africa" and served as a pillar of "cultural imperialism" (Rodney, 252, 253-6).

The domains of disease and religion are directly interlinked. Missionaries used medicine "as a way to transform Africans to Christians" and they also "exploited the anxiety over sickness and illness"

by saying they were “bringing relief to endangered souls” through the spread of the message of Jesus Christ (Hermann 2013 b). Interestingly enough, Western medical culture was more helpful for Africans than their own medical culture (Hermann 2013 b). Still, this does not justify the horrible actions of imperialists, missionaries, and others. Missionaries also thought that “the African body was a vessel of sin” and allowed Africans to become “missionaries in a sense” by spreading Christianity from person to person faster than their efforts (Hermann 2013 b). “Medical discourses in Africa” homogenized Africans as a “single indifferent mass” in part due to racism, since this did not apply to Europeans who had created the construct in the first place (Hermann 2013 b). If this wasn't enough, Africans perpetuated their own subordination to a system created by their engagement with the medical system, which was basically “social segregation within treatment and medicine” (Hermann 2013 b). As a result, it is easy to say that the “socio-political and economic context of diseases in Africa's racist imperial climate” better explains a “diseased state and mortality” of Africans than any sort of “biological explanation” (Hermann 2013 a).

Still, this does not fully delve into how disease was tied into the imperialism of European powers. Frantz Fanon, writing in his controversial analysis of the effects of colonialism, said that colonization succeeded once the “hostile, ungovernable, and fundamentally rebellious Nature” in the colonies was conquered through the building of railroads, “draining swamps, and ignoring the political and economic existence of the native population” (182). This is confirmed by the fact that “colonial empires provide a ready example of state manipulation of ethnic and other social identities” (Barkey & Sunita, 544). Additionally, it is important to remember that “the colonizer, in order to justify colonization, begins to see the native as an animal...and treats him as such” (Singer 2013). Such ideas relate directly to the function of disease in the theater of increasing European colonial action.

Specific examples illustrate this concept. During the 1890s, with Boer expansion into “black pastoral lands” in Southern Africa, leprosy was seen as evidence of the “Old Testament Leviticus account of...sin” (Watts, 71) As a result, black lepers were “targets for compulsory removal” and were

brought to “heavily guarded concentration camps ringed with barbed wire” in certain areas of the German and British empires (Watts, 71). Another instance worth mentioning is the “spread of tuberculosis” in South Africa which was contracted by blacks and whites alike, and deeply interconnected with colonialism and poverty (Hermann 2013 a). More specifically, the spread of tuberculosis across South Africa was the result of colonial authorities who didn't care, “continuing growth of towns, migrant labor, and greedy mine owners” (Hermann 2013 a). In the mines, conditions were exacerbated by the goal to continually increase efficiency and the overcrowded, inadequate housing of the workers resulting in epidemics and diseases across mine compounds (Hermann 2013 a). It is no surprise that while “massive exploitation of mineral resources in Africa” led to devastating implications for workers' well-being, and white workers were helped by the government, but black workers with poor health were not helped (Hermann 2013 a). Such a high “incidence of disease among black workers” was later “used as a justification for racial segregation” and apartheid (Hermann 2013 a). This is no surprise because “race has always been used in South African settings” to suggest that the enemy is “within,” inferring that the “danger” posed by non-white communities “are directly linked to social chaos and criminality” (Badroodien, 1999). Rodney adds that in colonial Africa, “the exploitation of miners was entirely without responsibility” and that miners didn't have adequate health services (207). Such instances show how racialized thought can influence medical practices.

These examples only hint at the full reality. As Rodney notes, “limited social services within Africa during colonial times” were distributed in such a manner which “reflected the pattern of domination and exploitation” (206). However, this may have been different during the rise of colonialism in Africa. There is something deeper that ties the different domains together. While the link between advancements in tropical medicine and imperialism does not seem to be causal, it seems clear that achievements in new “medical knowledge” were started by European military doctors (Curtin, ix-x, xi). Starting in the 1860s, new “medical discoveries” by military doctors “set the stage” for reduction in the European death rate in tropical Africa (Curtin, 23). These efforts created a foundation for what

was to happen with medicine and increasing European conquest in the second half of the 19th century (Curtin, 28).

The thesis and investigation by Curtis is important, but there is more that relates to the domains of medicine. Increased trade, control and settlement by Europeans “had important consequences for the history of disease, its diffusion” and effect on communities across the world (Hays, 179). Some consequences included the improved movement of food, but possible “inadequate preserved foods” which were moldy or had other problems resulting from travel (Hays, 180). Most importantly, as a result of European expansion, railways led to “larger social and economic dislocations” which allowed disease to spread (Hays, 181). Increased connection between different areas via roads, railroads, steamships, and other modes, made it easier for diseases to spread from place to place. As a result, the reshaping of “international and transoceanic intercourse” and movement patterns within Africa made epidemics more likely (Hays, 182). European expansion also came with the idea of superiority: “Western medicine, and its power over disease” was used as a justification for “expansion of imperial power,” to show the “greatness” of Western culture and to prove “the social and moral inferiority of non-Westerners” (Hays, 182). More directly, conquest which often led to military occupation “brought venereal disease” to certain areas and a concern for the health of troops (Hays, 183). Military expansion coupled with economic development subjected people to new diseases as they were moved to urban areas with work conditions that weakened their disease resistance (Hays, 183). In the end, disease during the era of rising European colonialism caused things to fall apart.

This essay originally proposed the thesis that European imperialism through the domains of politics, religion, and disease made “things fall apart” in Africa. Martin Luther King, Jr. once said that “within the wide arena of everyday life we see evil in all of its ugly dimensions” which was the case with “imperialistic nations crushing other people with the battering rams of social injustice” (King, 80). While he was speaking many years after the rise of colonialism, interlinked to European imperialism, what he says accurately describes what European capitalist states were doing in the late 19th century

and into the 20th century. Frantz Fanon, still controversial today, said “we must remember in any case that a colonized people is not just a dominated people” and that the colonized must remember “that colonialism never gives away anything for nothing” because colonized people make the concessions, not colonialism itself (92, 182).

Before ending this essay, the nature of African resistance to European imperialism must be explored. Africans did not passively accept this new form of domination. As a result of imperialism there were some unexpected consequences. Attacks on Africa by Europeans led to an increased commitment to African sovereignty. Secondly, while there was no collective resistance to imperialism, by 1900 Africans knew that the European assault on Africa was continent wide, leading to the creation of African identity and consciousness with ideologies like African nationalism & pan-Africanism.

Earlier, in the essay, the defeat of the Italians in 1896 by native Ethiopians armed with European weaponry was mentioned almost in passing. But, this was not the only defeat of European forces by Africans on the battlefield. In the battle of Dogali in 1887, Ethiopians who had “the most well equipped standing army on the African continent” engaged in a skirmish with the confident but ill-prepared Italians, resulting in a “stunning victory” for the Ethiopians who “totally routed the invading Italians” (South African History Online 2014). As a result of this, Ethiopians won the First Italo-Ethiopian War. Years earlier, in 1879, during the Anglo-Zulu war, there was the Battle of Isandlwana which was “fought against a native adversary the British initially underestimated” resulting in perhaps “the most humiliating defeat in British military history” (Rough Jr., 1). Eventually, after a second invasion later that year, the result was the destruction of the power of the Zulu kingdom “when it was divided into 13 separate and independent chiefdoms” (Rough Jr., 5). The British had won.

There were other acts of resistance. Some African states pushed forward efforts at diplomacy with Europeans, while some individual Africans engaged in guerrilla warfare and burning fields of food which prolonged but could not win against imperialism. There were a number of failed revolts and uprisings showing the uneasiness of Africans. From 1879 to 1882, there was a nationalist Islamic

revolution in Egypt called the 'Urabi Revolt. The revolt would develop into a broad social revolution with some wanting liberal rights and institutions while others had an “unalterable opposition to European imperialism” before it was crushed by the British (Cole, 149, 153). In 1881, there was another revolt brought on by the French. In an effort to undermine the sovereignty of Tunisia, the French imposed heavy-handed rule, and it resulted “one of the earliest and most successful nationalist movements in the French empire” (University of California 2013). There were smaller revolts and rebellions as well. One of these was the short-lived Madhi revolt in Egypt led by an Islamic cleric of the name of Muhammad Ahmad, with a victory in the Siege of Khartoum where all of the British and Egyptian troops guarding the city were killed (Asher 2005). Ahmad transformed an “incipient political movement” in Sudan “into a fundamentally religious one” by urging a holy war against “imperial Egypt” which lasted from 1881 to 1898, with his death the following year (Hurst 2011). From 1905-1906, there was a Zulu uprising against British rule called the Bambatha Rebellion. This rebellion in particular is important because it is “seen as the birth of black resistance that later ended apartheid” even though it was just a “protest against an unpopular British tax” (Hennop 2006). There was one more revolt which was even more important than this rebellion. It was the Maji Maji rebellion of 1905-1908 against German imperialists. This rebellion not only had “continental importance for all of Africa” but it was a “great anti-colonial uprising” centered around resentment stemming from introduction of forced labor, colonial tax policies, and “weakening of traditional elites” (Giblin & Monson, 1, 8; Hodge, 450). More importantly, it was the origins of Tanzanian nationalism, the “strongest local revolt against the colonial government in German East Africa” and “was one of the most organised and explicit rebellions in colonial history” (Fitzpatrick, 302; Thompson 2013)

There were also a number of African states which stood against European imperialism. One of these was the Ashanti Kingdom, which traded directly with the British but maintained traditional beliefs, while also engaging in nearly “a century of resistance to British power” until their final conquering by the British in 1902 (Microsoft Encarta Africana 1999). There was also the West African

Mandinka empire led by Samori Toure, whose “imperialistic designs” collided with the French, resulting in war starting in the 1880s (Lipschutz, 204) As a result, he moved his empire eastward, engaging in a “scorched-earth policy” in those lands he vacated, but the relentless military drive of the French eventually led to victory in 1898 (Lipschutz, 204). Then there was Ahmadou Sekou Tall of the Seku-Tukolor (or Toucouleur) empire who first attempted diplomacy with the French and then led the “anti-French coalition of African states” until his death in 1892 (Okoth, 12, 14). There was also Ethiopia which thoroughly resisted imperialists, specifically Italian imperialists, until 1936. There were also two other independent states, the Majeerteen Sultanate and the Sultanate of Hobyo, but both had made agreements with European powers (Laitin, 71; Issa-Salwe, 34-5).

Some say that Liberia was also a place of resistance against European imperialism. Walter Rodney dismissed this, writing that “it is common knowledge that Liberia was an American colony in everything but the name” (192). While some may quibble with his idea, it is clear that Liberia did not really serve as a bastion of anti-imperialism or anti-colonialism. The origins of this country lie in the American Colonization Society which got “financial support of the federal and many state governments” to send freed black slaves back to Africa (Ajayi, 314). While blacks may have thought this was liberating, whites who were behind it still had racialized thoughts and assumptions in wanting to move such former slaves back to Africa. Among missionaries, such 'liberated' blacks believed Africa needed to be “civilized and Christianized” while they had to wrestle with their “Western orientation” resulting in many initially holding Africa and Africans at arm’s length (Chaudhuri, Strobel, & Jacobs, 207-8). This brings back a quote from Martin Luther King Jr.'s famous 160 page book, *Why We Wait*, “no one can pretend that because a people are oppressed, every individual member is virtuous and worthy” (45). The push for Christianity in Africa was obvious: some former slaves going to found Liberia itself were missionaries, sent to “spread...the Christian gospel in West Africa” (Ajayi, 314). Interestingly, indigenous Africans didn't trust the former black slaves who asserted they were superior, even engaging of enslavement of such indigenous people. Later, this would lead to a bloody civil war

in the 1980s between these two factions which resulted in the intervention of international peacekeeping forces (Oliver & Atmore, 349-52). They later created a constitution based on the US Constitution which supposedly pushed forward equality, but it actually excluded indigenous Africans. Most importantly, the US and Britain accepted Liberian independence, giving it special status during the “scramble for Africa” among European powers (Microsoft 2000).

This further cements the reason that the nature of European imperialism led by Britain and France, also including Spain, Italy, Germany, Portugal, and Belgium must not be forgotten. These countries followed the advice of the French statesperson Leon Gambetta: “to remain a great nation or to become one, you must colonise” (Sen, 7). Social revolutionary Rosa Luxembourg argued that violence, which was practiced as an element of the brutal tactics of imperialism, was “a normal condition of capitalism” and further argued that “violence had been perpetuated by independent agents...agents of the state...[and the] impersonal fluctuations of the economic system itself” (Etherington, 116). While it would take thorough analysis to prove if violence was a “normal condition of capitalism,” it is clear that the latter part of her argument was certainly happening in Africa. Missionaries, explorers, soldiers, politicians and even doctors all played a part in violence against Africans. From the transatlantic slave trade to forced labor of Africans in service of the wealthy European and western capitalists, this was the case in all of the colonies across Africa.

Martin Luther King once said that, “most of the Asian and African peoples were colonial subjects, dominated politically, exploited economically, and segregated and humiliated” and they protested against this injustice (King, 83). The protest that King described was the anti-colonial struggle which continues today with those who fight neo-colonialism and present-day imperialism practiced by countries ranging from the US and Britain to France, some in their former stomping ground (Azikiwe 2013; Seymour 2014; Jay 2014). In the end, European imperialism caused things to fall apart in Africa and led the development of an ethic of African resistance.

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